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ABSTRACT

In order to ascertain the impact of post-graduate course work on curricular practice, a follow-up study was undertaken of the classroom writing practices of participants in the 1987 Writing as Process seminars sponsored by William Paterson College, New Jersey. Seminars were offered in four elementary school districts, each one taught by a William Paterson College instructor and a teacher from the host district. Information for the follow-up study was obtained through surveys, telephone and in-person interviews, and school visits. Results indicated that teachers are making more time for writing in their daily programs and are generally following a process approach. While the middle school teachers are including writing in content areas, the elementary school teachers are more apt to be using writing workshops in their reading/language arts programs. The dissemination of material learned in the seminars has, in general, been limited. Results imply: (1) that teaching such seminars on-site with a college instructor and a knowledgeable teacher from the district can be an effective approach; (2) that the integration of computers into writing programs can be helpful and requires collaboration between computer teachers and classroom teachers; (3) that teachers need support from administrators to implement writing as process teaching; and (4) that school districts can benefit from establishing and maintaining ties with local colleges that are centers for promoting writing. (Four tables of data are included, and an appendix containing the survey instrument is attached.) (SR)

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A Follow-up Study of the Writing as Process Seminars in the Elementary School

Final Report
Assigned Research Time
Spring, 1988

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May, 1988

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A Follow-up Study of the Writing as Process Seminars in the Elementary School

Joan T. Feeley

The impact of in-service training or post-graduate course work on curricular practice is best evaluated by ascertaining what practices are carried over into everyday classroom routines and shared with other teachers well after the coursework has been concluded. To this end, a follow-up study was undertaken of the classroom writing practices of the participants of the 1987 Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) seminars conducted under the Fund for the Improvement of Collegiate Education (FICE) grant at William Paterson College.

The 1987 phase of the FICE/WAC grant was focused on writing in the elementary schools. Seminars in Teaching Writing as Process (WAP) were offered in four districts with each seminar taught by a William Paterson College (WPC) instructor and a teacher from the host district. In the spring, Joan T. Feeley (WPC) instructor and Lori Harvell, a first grade teacher, taught the Paterson seminar in Maring Luther King School, while Mildred Dougherty (WPC) and Jane Haitema, a sixth grade teacher, conducted the Newton seminar in Halstead St. School. In the fall, Mildred Dougherty (WPC) and Maria Green taught the Englewood seminar in Lincoln School while Shelley Wepner (WPC) and Virginia Andreano led the Wayne seminar in Schuyler-

Colfax School. The program served a broad spectrum of teachers from urban (Paterson), suburban (Wayne and Englewood), and rural (Newton) school districts.

To find out to what extent the praticipating teachers were implementing WAP and WAC in their classrooms and sharing their experiences in teaching writing with others, a survey instrument (Appendix A) was developed by the seminar teachers and Sally Hand, PICE/WAC Coordinator. This survey was sent out to spring participants in March 1988. The information that follows was obtained from the returned surveys, telephone and in-person interviews, and school visits.

The Spring Seminars: Paterson and Newton

The spring seminars began in January, 1987, and met for three hours once a week for 12 weeks. The teachers spent part of the time writing their own pieces in a writing workshop and the rest of the time learning about teaching writing through the process approach as described by Graves (1983) and Calkins (1986). Evaluations of the course and its effect on writing apprehension were conducted with pre-and post-course measures and reported elsewhere (Feeley, 1987 and 1988).

The Paterson Seminar

The Paterson seminar consisted of 15 participants: one vice-principal of an elementary school, 6 classroom teachers, and 8 special teachers including Basic Skills Instructors (BSI), a resource room teacher, a math teacher, a Special Ed teacher, and a Work-Study coordinator. These were seasoned teachers, with 7 having more than 10 years of experience and 3 having more than 6 years of experience. Five had a master's degree plus graduate work. Only one had just a bachelor's degree.

Twelve of the 15 answered the questions on the follow-up survey (Appendix A) sent in the fall of 1987, the semester after the seminar had been offered. One responded that he was unable to answer because he was on sabbatical leave, another said she had been assigned to a non-teaching position, and the third just didn't return the survey.

According to the 12 Paterson teachers who answered the survey, writing appears to have become an important part of their teaching day. When asked how often their children write, 67% said every day and 33% said a few times a week.

Six items on the survey (Table 1) dealt with writing-as-process elements. These teachers seem to be

Table 1
Follow-up of Paterson Teachers: Fall, 1987
N=12

	Item	Yes	To some extent	Not at all
1.	Are you using the Writing as Process or Writing Workshop approach?	83%	17%	--
2.	Do your students write from their own topics' lists?	67%	33%	--
3.	Do your students draft, share pieces with peers and/or you, and revise after conferences?	67%	25%	8%
4.	Do your students edit selected pieces to standard form?	33%	67%	--
5.	Do your students publish their work and refer to themselves as authors?	33%	67%	--
6.	Do your students write in the content areas?	--	58%	42%
7.	Have other teachers asked you to help them get their students writing?	--	42%	58%
8.	Has your principal or superintendent asked to help other teachers to promote writing?	--	42%	58%
9.	Have you shared your experiences in teaching writing through in-service workshops or other opportunities?	50%	25%	25%
10.	Would you like to share your experiences with teaching writing?	50%	25%	25%

solidly supportive of the process approach: 83% said they are using it, while 17% said they followed it to some extent. The majority, or 67%, said their children wrote from their own topics' lists, and the remainder (33%) said that the children used their own topics to some extent. As for drafting, sharing, and revising pieces, 67% said their students did go through these processes, 25% said students engaged in these activities to some extent, and only one said these were not being used at all.

Editing and publishing did not fare as well, perhaps because the survey was mailed out in October, and some had not gotten to these stages with their classes. One third said that their students edited and published pieces; the remaining were into these stages to some extent. When asked in what ways these students published, 7 indicated individual books and bulletin boards, 6 circled collected works, and 11 checked off oral sharing which was clearly the most preferred mode. One sixth grade teacher said that her students produced a video which they wrote and acted out entirely on their own.

While more than half of these teachers said that their students were doing some writing in the content areas, 42% responded <u>not at all</u> to this item. Math, science, social studies, and health were mentioned as content areas in which writing was being done. Since

several from this Paterson group are basic skills instructors (BSI), they don't have their students for content area instruction; these BSI teachers reported that they were having their students write in their reading and math classes.

Some items (7 through 9) asked the teachers about their opportunities and willingness to share their knowledge of, and experiences with, teaching writing to others. Apparently, school personnel are not overly interested in having them share: over 50% responded that no other teachers or their supervisors had asked them to share. Despite this lack of interest, 50% said they have given workshops and would be willing to share with others. While 25% were more tentative, saying they may be willing to share after more experience, only three said they definitely would not want to share.

Some teachers wrote special information about their teaching/writing experiences. One seventh grade teacher applied for and received a $400. grant from the Paterson Foundation to purchase supplies for her writing workshop. A vice-principal said she asks children, who are sent to her for discipline problems, to write about what happened before she spoke with them. Often the writing down of their perceptions and feelings helps the discipline interview go better. The students can vent their anger,

and she has a better idea of what the problem is. One participant, who was a resource room teacher during the regular year, reported using the writing workshop very effectively with eighth-grade remedial students in a summer program. A primary teacher thought the California Achievement Test scores had improved since her children had begun to write regularly.

The writer visited School 6 in Paterson to lend support to seminar participants who were trying to promote writing on their grade levels. One first-grade teacher had presented ideas at her grade level meeting, a second-grade teacher had "published" pieces displayed on her bulletin boards, and a third-grade teacher had her students doing individual books for a district-wide display. The vice-principal, who had participated in the seminar, was very supportive of WAP/WAC, suggesting a focus on writing at all grade levels.

Telephone interviews with some of the participants indicated a continuing interest and high commitment to writing. In fact, an "alumnae" meeting of participants is being planned for late spring so that all can share their year-long experiences with WAP/WAC. It appears that, among the participants of the Paterson seminar, writing is alive and well.

The Newton Seminar

The Newton group consisted of 16 participants, 13 classroom teachers and 3 specialists (speech/language, vocal music, and math/social studies). Like the Paterson group, they too were veteran teachers, with 7 having more than 10 years experience and 5 more than six years of teaching. As for educational background, three had a master's degree and 10 had a bachelor's degree plus. Perhaps these teachers lagged behind the Paterson group in graduate degrees because they are in a rural area without easy access to post-college work.

As for the Newton teachers, 15 of the 16 answered the survey with 80% reporting that their students write either every day or a few times a week. Only 20% write once a week or less.

According to Table 2, 53% of the Newton participants are teaching writing as a process; 47% are following this approach to some extent. Some commented that they are getting into WAP gradually and modeling the process for their students. While one third of these teachers said their students were writing from their own topics' lists, the rest answered to some extent on topics, saying students often alternated between their own and assigned topics.

As for drafting, sharing, and revising, the Newton teachers checked off Yes 80% of the time. They appear to be solidly behind these elements of WAP. One middle-grade

Table 2
Follow-up of Newton Teachers: Fall, 1987
N=15

Item	Yes	To some extent	Not at all
1. Are you using the Writing As Process or Writing Workshop approach?	53%	47%	--
2. Do your students write from their own topics' lists?	33%	67%	--
3. Do your students draft, share pieces with peers and/or you, and revise after conferences?	80%	20%	--
4. Do your students edit selected pieces to standard form?	67%	13%	20%
5. Do your students publish their work and refer to themselves as authors?	33%	47%	20%
6. Do your students write in the content areas?	53%	40%	6%
7. Have other teachers asked you to help them get their students writing?	13%	20%	67%
8. Has your principal or superintendent asked you to help other teachers to promote writing?	40%	6%	53%
9. Have you shared your experiences in teaching writing through in-service workshops or other opportunities?	53%	20%	27%
10. Would you like to share experiences with teaching writing?	13%	40%	47%

teacher said her students really enjoy her sharing of her own writing with them.

While 67% of these teachers said their students edited selected pieces, only 33% had gotten to publishing. As with the Paterson group, oral sharing was the most preferred mode for publishing (13), while putting work on bulletin boards (12) and in collections (11) ranked second. Only 7 said their students were publishing individual books. Again, their responses must be considered in terms of the time of year these data were collected, midway through the fall semester. Several said they planned one more publishing as the year went on.

More of the Newton group, as opposed to the Paterson teachers, said their students were writing in the content areas: 53% said Yes and 40% said to some extent. Perhaps this is because more of the Newton teachers came from the middle grades in which the content areas are most important. Science and social studies were the two areas mentioned most frequently.

The last three items on the survey summarize these Newton teachers' responses about their opportunities and willingness to share their writing experience with other teachers. While other teachers did not express much in-

terest (67% checked not at all), 53% reported that they had shared at in-service workshops. These were mainly the teachers from Merriam Avenue School whose principal had asked them to give presentations at an in-service day after they had finished the course. Some shared at unit level meetings or informally with other teachers. One teacher had written a piece for Zero Draft, the newsletter for the North Jersey Writing Consortium. On the whole, these teachers were more tentqtive about being willing to share in public ways: 13% said Yes and 40% said to some extent. Some mentioned they would rather just "talk to" teachers in their own building rather than "go public."

When asked to report any other information about their writing programs, the Newton teachers were very enthusiastic. One waid she was replacing her language arts textbook with her WAP workshops. A first-grade teacher said she has her children writing from the start rather than waiting until the end of the year. A second-grade teacher said her children ask to write daily; another reported that a student said, "Boy, we write a lot! And it's fun!" It appears that writing is flourising in the Newton schools.

The Fall Seminars: Wayne and Englewood

The fall seminars began in September of 1987, meet-

ing for three hours a session for 12 weeks. The format was similar to that followed in the spring seminars: a writing workshop for teachers followed by a lecture/demonstration session on teaching writing. While the Graves (1983) text was used in both seminars, the Fulwiler (1986) text, Learning through Writing, was substituted for the Calkins (1986) text in Wayne. This substitution was made because the Wayne seminar attracted mostly middle-school teachers who taught in the content areas rather than in self-contained elementary school classroom.

The spring seminars also differed from those given in the fall in another way. Wayne requested the addition of word processing to the course syllabus because the district is anxious to have teachers integrate the computer into their programs. For this reason, Dr. Shelley Wepner, a computer expert at WPC, was asked to lead the Wayne seminar.

Serendipitously, Bob Gollob, a computer teacher, in Lincoln School in Englewood, enrolled in the Englewood seminar. Bob took the course because he wanted to know more about teaching the writing process so that he could help the classroom teachers in his school with their writing projects. He was teaching the children word processing and wanted them to be able to use it in real writing

situations. Bob willingly introduced his fellow teachers in the seminar to Bank Street Writer, a simple word processing package widely used in elementary schools. Thus, a new component was introduced in the fall seminar: word processing for the teachers. Feeley (1988) has described the teachers' immediate evaluations of the courses; this report will deal with the on-going effects of the seminars, ascertained by participants' responses to surveys distributed in late March, 1988.

The Wayne Seminar

There were 15 participants in the Wayne seminar. Except for one fourth-grade teacher, all were content area teachers of grades 6 through 8, representing a cross-section of disciplines. There were 3 from physical education/health, 2 from English, and one from each of the following areas: art, music, social studies, English as a second language, and typing. The remaining two had special assignments: resource room teacher and supplementary teacher. These were seasoned teachers: 11 had taught 10 or more years, three 6-10 years, and only one had taught less than 5 years. As for educational background, 7 had a master's degree or better, 4 had a bachelor's degree-plus, and 4 had only a bachelor's degree.

Ten of the 15 returned the survey forms sent in late

March, 1988, three months after the seminar had been concluded. Since these were almost all content area teachers at the middle school level, it was understandable that half said their children write less than once a week. While three language arts teachers said their students write a few times a week and two other teachers reported having writing once a week, 50% responded that their students wrote less than once a week.

These teachers appear to be supportive of the WAP approach,with 40% responding that they use the workshop approach and the rest saying they use it to some extent. Eighty percent said their students follow-the-process (drafting, sharing, revising, editing, etc.) either completely or to some extent. (See Table 3.)

As for encouraging students to write from their own topics' lists, 30% said yes and 40% said to some extent. Topic selection is a controversial issue in the writing literature. Lee (1987) suggests a balance between self-selected and assigned topics, with a 50-50 break coming at the middle school grades. It seems that these teachers are reflecting this balance.

Publishing students' writing is an important part of the process cycle. Only one teacher reported publishing at this time; but three were planning on publications by the end of the term. The others said they had no time for publishing in their content area programs.

Table 3
Follow-up of Wayne Teachers: Spring, 1988
N=10

	Item	Yes	To some extent	Not at all
1.	Are you using the Writ-as Process or Writing Workshop approach?	40%	60%	--
2.	Do your students write from their own topics' lists?	30%	40%	30%
3.	Do your students draft, share pieces with peers and/or you, and revise/ edit after conferences?	40%	40%	20%
4.	Do your students publish their work and refer to themselves as authors?	10%	40%	50%
5.	Are you using word processing in your writing program?	--	--	100%
6.	Do your students write in the content areas?	40%	40%	20%
7.	Have other teachers asked you to help them get their students writing?	--	--	100%
8.	Has your principal or superintendent asked you to help other teachers to promote writing?	--	--	100%
9.	Have you shared your experiences in teaching writing through in-service workshops or other opportunities?	--	--	100%
10.	Would you like to share your experiences with teaching writing?	50%	20%	30%

All but two teachers, said that students write in their content areas. For example, physical education students keep fitness and self image journals and write about people in sports; in art students write their own drawing evaluations and art interpretations; in music they write responses to selected pieces of music and about favorite composers.

As for sharing their knowledge about WAP, these teachers unanimously reported that they have not spoken with other teachers nor have their supervisors asked them to share. About half said they would help other teachers in their building. It appears that several would be willing to share informally or at in-service workshops if asked.

The responses on the use of word processing (WP) are interesting. Wayne was the district that specifically wanted the WP component, and yet no one was using it at the time of the survey. Some said there was no time to include it in their content area program or they had no access to computers. Two English teachers expressed an interest in WP, with one saying she is desperately seeking one for her and the other claiming that a computer is coming to her language arts class shortly.

There were no negative comments from these Wayne teachers. Those who chose to share other information

made the following favorable statements.

> An English teacher said: I found the course Writing as a Process to be very helpful in aiding me to approach many writing experiences with my writing students in a creative & exciting way.
>
> A physical education teacher wrote: The course has caused me to realize how writing is a learning tool, not just an end result. I have also incorporated some writing in Health Ed. program.
>
> A fourth grade teacher commented: I think the children's journals have made a big difference in many of their lives--especially those who thought that they didn't like writing.
>
> A language arts teacher reported: My writing program is basically designed around the Writing As Process course I took. The text books we used and the information from the class are my main sources. It was just about the best course I have ever taken. For once, the professor's knowledge was USED!

The Englewood Seminar

The Englewood group consisted of 11 teachers, all working with K-6 classes. Two taught kindergarten, one first grade. Three were special education teachers, while one taught English as a second language and one ran a computer lab. While 7 had only the bachelor's degree, 3 held master's degrees and 2 were enrolled in master's programs.

Eighty percent of the 10 Englewood elementary school teachers who responded to the survey reported that their children write every day; the remaining 20% said their students write a few times a week. They appear to be commited to the WAP approach, with half saying they employ writing workshop and half reporting that they use it to some extent. Table 4 summarizes their responses to the survey.

As for using the components of the process approach (draft, share, revise, etc.) 60% responded affirmatively and 30% answered to some extent. Only one responded negatively. All but two said they were publishing their children's writing in some form. A special education teacher said she types the children's stories and they bind them into books. (Table 4).

While two teachers said their children write from their own topics' lists, the rest said assigned topics were interspersed with those that were self-generated.

Word processing (WP) came into the Englewood seminar quite by chance. Bob Gollob, the computer teacher, took the course to help the teachers with their writing programs. He really did seem to make a difference: 70% reported using WP in their writing programs. Bob has the second and third grades in his school writing their final drafts on the computer and illustrating their class books with utility programs like "Print Shop" and "The Principal's Assistant." He has enlisted the aid of the art teacher who helps with the covers, illustrations, and binding of books.

Contrary to the middle school teachers in Wayne, the Englewood teachers are not using writing as much in the content areas. Only two responded affirmatively while half responded to some extent. As in Paterson and Newton, social studies and science were mentioned as areas for writing projects; field trips were the sources for several content area writing pieces.

Items 8, 9, and 10 dealt with the sharing of WAP

Table 4
Follow-up of Englewood Teachers: Spring, 1988
N=10

	Item	Yes	To some extent	Not at all
1.	Are you using the Writ-as Process or Writing Workshop approach?	50%	50%	--
2.	Do your students write from their own topics' lists?	20%	80%	--
3.	Do your students draft, share pieces with peers and/or you, and revise/ edit after conferences?	60%	30%	10%
4.	Do your students publish their work and refer to themselves as authors?	50%	30%	--
5.	Are you using word processing in your reading program?	50%	20%	30%
6.	Do your students write in the content areas?	20%	50%	30%
7.	Have other teachers asked you to help them get their students writing?	30%	10%	60%
8.	Has your principal or superintendent asked you to help other teachers to promote writing?	10%	10%	80%
9.	Have you shared your experiences in teaching writing through in-servive workshops or other opportunities?	30%	--	70%
10.	Would you like to share your experiences with teaching writing?	30%	30%	40%

experiences. About one third of the Englewood teachers have shared informally, and half would be willing to help others if asked. Only one principal specifically asked a teacher "to spread the word."

Again, those who chose to write general comments were positive.

> A kindergarten teacher wrote: The children feel successful in a risk-free environment. It has been a very positive experience.
>
> A math teacher said: The experience was very informative. Next year's class assignment may provide an opportunity to include writing and some techniques learned during the workshop.
>
> A first grade teacher reported: Accepting invented spelling was difficult at first, but the students and parents now understand the process that's going on. I use writing each day but I feel that I'd like to mesh it in with the Reading Curriculum to a greater extent due to lack of classroom time to cover the basal.
>
> A special education teacher felt her children gained in many ways. She wrote: My children write daily in their journals. They ask to share their entries by standing up and reading to the class.
>
> A teacher of English as a Second Language wrote: In addition to being academically sound, this process is also very high on the motivational scale. The students are very anxious to have "their" piece be in the first book of four or five autobiographies. It reminds us constantly of the importance of step-by-step development, from brainstorming, through organization, conferencing, writing, re-writing (editing), to its conclusion in publishing. The organizational training carries over into areas other than writing for English per se.

Conclusions and Implications

These four writing-as-process seminars appear to have been very successful in that participants are put-

ting into practice what they learned. These teachers are making more time for writing in their daily programs and are generally following a process approach. While the middle-school teachers are including writing in their content areas, the elementary school teachers are more apt to be using writing workshop in their reading/language arts programs. To some extent, the elementary level teachers are beginning to include writing in their content areas, especially social studies and science.

Except for Newton, where the seminar participants were asked to present at in-service workshops and to promote the teaching of writing in their schools, dissemination has been limited.

As for integrating computers into the teaching of writing, the WAP seminars would seem to be a natural starting point. In Wayne, the teachers generally were pleased to have the exposure themselves (Feeley, 1988), but they couldn't implement word processing because of lack of access and time. The Englewood teachers picked up on their experiences more readily because they did have access to computers whether in their classrooms or in a lab setting. They also had support from their computer teacher, Bob Gollob, who encouraged them to have children continue their writing in his computer lab.

Bob and the teachers worked with the children on all facets of the writing process and word processing. The material benefits were evident.

This follow-up study has the following implications for schools:

1. Writing as process seminars taught on-site, with sessions shared between a college-level instructor and a knowledgeable teacher from the district, can be a very fruitful way of getting a process or workshop approach started in a district.

2. If computers are to be successfully integrated into writing programs, support must come from outside the classrooms. Computer teachers should learn about the writing process, and classroom teachers should learn how word processing works. Englewood has shown the way: the computer teacher and art teacher work with the classroom teachers to augment the writing workshop. Collaboration is the key word.

3. Teachers need support from administrators and other staff members to implement writing workshop since it takes time from the academic day and a commitment to see students through the cycle from topic selection and prewriting to final publishing.

Supervisors and administrators should provide continuous in-service sessions as needed, tapping successful

teachers in the system to lead the in-service. Present staff members are the best resources since they know the problems encountered locally. Also, this approach encourages a community spirit, bringing teachers and supervisors together in networks to meet common goals

4. Districts should establish and maintain ties with local colleges and universities that have been identified as centers for promoting writing. For example, William Paterson College has created the North Jersey Writing Consortium which publishes a newsletter, Zero Draft. This quarterly publishes articles on writing action/research/activities and news of local conferences. The consortium also maintains a file of proven speakers from the area who can address specific topics on writing. By becoming a part of such a consortium, a school district can develop an even larger network for its staff to draw from as they seek excellence in teaching writing.

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Appendix A

The Survey

Name: _____ Date: _____

School: _____ Address: _____

Teaching assignment: _____ Home Phone: _____

1. How often do your children write?

	Everyday	A few times a week	Once a week	Less than once a week

(Circle the most appropriate answer)

Please check as appropriate:	Yes	To some extent	Not at all

2. Are you using the Writing As Process or Writing Workshop approach?

   Comments:

3. Do your students write from their own topics' lists?

   Comments:

4. Do your students draft, share pieces with peers and/or you, and revise/ edit after conferences?

   Comments:

5. Do your students publish their work and refer to themselves as authors?

   Comments: (Tell how they "Publish.")

6. Are you using word processing in your writing program?

   Comments: (Tell how you and/or your students are using word processing.)

	Yes	To some extent	Not at all
7. Do your students write in the content areas? (If they do, indicate in your comments what they write and the content areas in which they write.) Comments:			
8. Have other teachers asked you to help them get their students writing? Comments:			
9. Has your principal or superintendent asked you to help other teachers to promote writing? Comments:			
10. Have you shared your experiences in teaching writing through in-service workshops or other opportunities? Explain: _____			
11. Would you like to share your experiences with teaching writing? Explain how _____			

12. Please share any other information about your writing program.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____